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Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Summary

The present document sets out the evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), which enters into force on 1 January 2013. The policy governs the independent evaluation function of UN-Women and applies to all initiatives supported and funds administered by the Entity. It is aligned with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), but is tailored specifically to the unique mandate and role of UN-Women to conduct evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights and to support coordination, coherence and accountability with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the United Nations system.

The policy lays out the purpose of evaluation in UN-Women, the Entity's tailored definition of evaluation and the principles and standards that guide its practice. It covers both the coordination role of UN-Women with respect to United Nations system-wide evaluations concerning gender equality and the corporate and decentralized evaluation of the operational, normative support and coordination work undertaken by the Entity. It presents the evaluation criteria to be applied in UN-Women evaluations and the process and parameters for selecting evaluations to ensure adequate evaluation coverage. The policy also directs the management and use of evaluation, the establishment of a quality assurance system, and evaluation capacity development. Finally, the policy outlines clear roles and responsibilities with respect to evaluation at all levels of UN-Women and the process of the external evaluation of the evaluation function and of the Entity at the organizational level.

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The Executive Board may wish to:

- Welcome the development of the UN-Women evaluation policy consistent with General Assembly resolutions 64/289 and 62/208 and the UNEG norms and standards
- Endorse the present document as the policy statement on the evaluation function of UN-Women
- Acknowledge with appreciation the steps taken by UN-Women to ensure an independent, credible and useful evaluation function
- Request UN-Women to ensure compliance with the evaluation policy through the establishment of mechanisms for the implementation of its principles and commitments and for increased capacities in the areas of programme design, monitoring and evaluation, and to report on a regular basis on the progress made in continuing to strengthen the evaluation function and improve the use of evaluation.

Introduction

1. The policy set out in the present document governs the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). It establishes a framework for ensuring an independent evaluation function that provides credible evidence with respect to the performance of UN-Women in terms of results achieved in the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also establishes the role of UN-Women in system-wide evaluation and in promoting evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights in the United Nations system. The policy applies to all initiatives supported and funds administered by UN-Women. It enters into force on 1 January 2013 and will be accompanied by systems to support its implementation with a view to effective compliance. The successful implementation of the policy will require the enhancement of the Entity's internal capacity in the areas of design, monitoring and evaluation.

2. UN-Women was created by the General Assembly by its resolution 64/289 "to provide, through its normative support functions and operational activities, guidance and technical support to all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming". The role of UN-Women is also one of leading, coordinating and promoting accountability with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations system with a view to more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming.

3. The UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013, approved by the Executive Board, commits the Entity to the development of an evaluation policy that will govern its evaluation function. By doing so, the strategic plan complies with the General Assembly resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy reviews of 2004 and 2007, which call for the development and the implementation, respectively, of the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) regarding evaluation in the United Nations system. The policy is also aligned with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8) and with the proposed revision to financial regulations and rules for UN-Women (UNW/2012/6).

4. Evaluation in UN-Women acts as a means to implement the gender mainstreaming agenda and the norms and principles outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals, Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 and resolution 2011/5 and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) policy on gender equality and women's empowerment and its corresponding system-wide action plan. More specifically, the implementation of the Entity's evaluation policy will be aligned with future quadrennial comprehensive policy review resolutions on gender equality and the empowerment of women, system-wide evaluation and the implementation of the system-wide action plan's performance indicator regarding gender-responsive evaluation.

Purpose and definition of evaluation in UN-Women

5. In UN-Women, evaluation is conducted for three main and equally important purposes that together support the overall delivery of results. First, it is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, including women who are rights holders and duty bearers, in managing for results (e.g., in the context of governing bodies, donor and partner Governments, sister United Nations agencies and UN-Women beneficiaries around the world). Secondly, it provides credible and reliable evidence for decision-making in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to improve results. Thirdly, it contributes important lessons learned about normative, operational and coordination work in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women to the existing knowledge base, including knowledge about how to achieve greater coherence between normative and operational work in those areas.

6. UN-Women subscribes to the UNEG definition of evaluation,[1] but directly incorporates principles of gender equality, women's rights and the empowerment of women.[2] Evaluation in the Entity is defined as a systematic and impartial assessment that provides credible and reliable evidence-based information about the extent to which an intervention[3] has resulted in progress (or the lack thereof) towards intended and/or unintended results regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women. As a process itself, evaluation is also a means to enhance gender equality and the empowerment of women through the incorporation of gender and women's rights dimensions into evaluation approaches, methods, processes and use. Accordingly, not only does evaluation act as an important driver of positive change towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, but the way in which the evaluation process itself is undertaken empowers the stakeholders involved.

7. More specifically, evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights assess whether interventions:

(a) Have been guided by the relevant international (national and regional) normative frameworks for gender equality and women's rights, United Nations system-wide mandates and organizational objectives;

(b) Have analysed and addressed the structures that contribute to inequalities experienced by women, men, girls and boys, especially those experiencing multiple forms of exclusion;

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[1] The UNEG norms define evaluation as "an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance, etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the United Nations system. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of the organizations of the United Nations system and its members".

[2] In accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/289, by which UN-Women was established.

[3] "Intervention" is defined in the broad sense: project, programme, strategy, plan, policy, sector, theme, operational or institutional area, etc.

(c) Have maximized participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) in their planning, design, implementation and decision-making processes;

(d) Sought out opportunities to build sustainable results through the empowerment and capacity-building of women and groups of rights holders and duty bearers;

(e) Have contributed to short-, medium- and long-term objectives (or the lack thereof) through the examination of results chains, processes, contextual factors and causality using gender- and rights-based analysis.

8. Evaluation is related to, but distinct from, four other oversight and organizational functions carried out in UN-Women:

(a) *Audit*, which is concerned mainly with assessing the adequacy of management controls to ensure the economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes. Audit is focused mainly on compliance, while evaluation is focused on results and enhancing the understanding of what works, why it works and how. Evaluations can make use of information about programme efficiency obtained through audits;

(b) *Monitoring*, which is a continuous programmatic management function aimed at providing regular information about, and early indications of progress (or the lack thereof) in, the achievement of intended results. It is commonly equated with reporting, as it is one of the main means of collecting information. While monitoring is concerned mainly with whether a programme is being carried out correctly, evaluation is also concerned with whether the right things are being done under a programme, why and how the intended and unintended results have been achieved, whether there are better ways of achieving the desired results, and whether the results achieved are sustainable;

(c) *Knowledge management*, which is the systematic and integrated process of creating, analysing, storing and disseminating knowledge resources. Evaluation findings and lessons are inputs to organizational learning and therefore feed into knowledge management systems;

(d) *Social research*, which is the systematic and in-depth analysis of social phenomena, designed specifically to generate or contribute to empirical knowledge. While evaluation uses traditional social science methods of data collection and analysis and can contribute to knowledge, its main purpose is to support management by contributing to organizational accountability, decision-making and learning. Social research is often a key source of information for evaluations.

Guiding evaluation principles and standards

9. A number of principles guide evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up, which, when taken together, ensure that all evaluation processes reflect (a) the overall normative, operational and coordination mandates of UN-Women as an entity within the United Nations system, (b) the commitment of UN-Women to evaluation that is responsive to gender equality and women's rights, and (c) alignment with the UNEG norms and standards, the UNEG ethical guidelines

and the handbook *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance*. Evaluation conducted in UN-Women should adhere to the following principles:

(a) *National ownership and leadership.* Evaluation should be country-driven. It should be planned and conducted to ensure national ownership and leadership of evaluation processes by both rights holders and duty bearers. To this end, it should support the development of capacity to conduct evaluations that are responsive to gender equality and women's rights;

(b) *United Nations system coordination and coherence with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women.* Evaluations should be conducted system-wide and jointly with United Nations sister agencies, whenever possible, as a means to promote coordination and coherence regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women. Evaluations should systematically assess how to improve coordination and coherence in terms of gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly with regard to normative and operational work in those areas;

(c) *Innovation.* Evaluations should seek to identify and illuminate innovations in the work of UN-Women with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women. They should also apply innovative evaluation approaches and methods that have potential to more fully capture the complex and long-term nature of achieving results in those areas;

(d) *Fair power relations and empowerment.* Evaluations should be conducted with an understanding of contextual power and gender relations. The process should seek to empower women and disadvantaged groups;

(e) *Participation and inclusion.* Evaluation processes should ensure stakeholder participation that is both relevant and inclusive, given the evaluation subject at hand. In particular, stakeholder analysis should be conducted and planned to take into account the additional time and resources needed to allow for the participation of all relevant stakeholder groups, especially women who face barriers to participation;

(f) *Independence and impartiality.* The evaluation function is to be carried out independently of other management functions in order to ensure that it is credible and free from undue influence and that it results in unbiased and transparent reports. Evaluators should demonstrate impartiality and be free from any conflict of interest or bias. They should have full access to information regarding the subjects that they are evaluating and the freedom to express their opinions;

(g) *Transparency.* Evaluations should be conducted in transparent and consultative manner with key stakeholders. Evaluation plans, terms of reference and reports should be made publicly available in order to enhance the transparency of UN-Women with regard to efficiency and commitment to managing for results;

(h) *Quality and credibility.* Evaluations should be conducted in a systematic manner,[4] applying sound approaches and methods to ensure the quality and credibility of findings, recommendations and lessons generated. Reports should be

[4] In accordance with the UNEG norms and standards, the UN-Women evaluation guidelines, the UNEG code of conduct and applicable ethical standards for research.

complete and balanced. A quality assurance mechanism will support evaluators and evaluation managers in this regard;

(i) *Intentionality and use of evaluation*. Planning for evaluations demonstrates a clear intent regarding the purpose and use of findings to improve the work of UN-Women or the United Nations system in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women, contributes to knowledge about gender equality and the empowerment of women, and/or contributes to broader United Nations system processes. This requires the proper timing of evaluations, as well as evaluation dissemination plans, management responses and action plans that reflect original intent;

(j) *Ethics*. Evaluators should have personal and professional integrity and abide by the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation and the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system, to ensure that the rights of individuals involved in an evaluation are respected.[5] Evaluators must act with cultural sensitivity and pay particular attention to protocols, codes and recommendations that may be relevant to their interactions with women.[6]

Coordination by UN-Women of United Nations system-wide evaluation on gender equality and the empowerment of women

10. The creation and the mandate of UN-Women were a direct response by Member States in furthering the United Nations reform agenda for system-wide coherence in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The mandate addresses gaps identified throughout the system regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women, including inadequate coordination among United Nations agencies, inadequate coherence between normative and operational work, lack of accountability and lack of authority. The comprehensive review of the independent system-wide evaluation mechanism[7] also noted the absence of a framework for integrating gender equality into system-wide evaluations and the expectation that UN-Women will actively promote the integration of gender equality into system-wide evaluation.

11. Therefore, UN-Women has an essential role in supporting the evaluation of progress made in fulfilling the commitments of the United Nations system with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women, specifically the implementation of the CEB system-wide policy on gender equality and women's empowerment and the related system-wide action plan.[8] It will support compliance with and reporting on the plan's performance indicator regarding gender-responsive evaluation.

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[5] See the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation and the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system.

[6] E.g., the World Health Organization publications *Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence against Women*, and *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*.

[7] See *Independent System-Wide Evaluation Mechanisms: Comprehensive Review of the Existing Institutional Framework for System-Wide Evaluation of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System Mandated in General Assembly Resolution 64/289*, March 2012.

[8] See *System-Wide Action Plan for Implementation of the United Nations CEB Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* (UN-Women).

12. UN-Women will promote United Nations system coherence, coordination and accountability in terms of gender equality and the empowerment of women through system-wide evaluation and joint evaluation by:

- Actively contributing to UNEG and to regional and country evaluation groups
- Promoting joint evaluation initiatives regarding gender equality and system-wide accountability at the global, regional and country levels
- Supporting gender-responsive evaluation capacity within the United Nations system
- Building evidence-based knowledge concerning gender equality.

13. More specifically, at the global level, system-wide evaluation will be used to address accountability gaps identified with respect to gender equality and the empowerment of women in the United Nations system. In addition, regional and country offices will promote coordination in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women within the United Nations system through participation in joint evaluation, United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations, "Delivering as one" evaluations and any relevant system-wide evaluation exercise at the regional or country level.

UN-Women evaluations[9]

14. Evaluations assess the operational work of UN-Women conducted at the global, regional and country levels, the normative support work undertaken by the Entity, and its coordination role within the United Nations system. All evaluations should assess the coherence of normative and operational work.

15. UN-Women evaluations provide evidence of the processes employed and results achieved at the output, outcome and impact levels; illuminate the connections implicit in the unique role of UN-Women in terms of operational, normative support and coordination work; and reveal the factors and modalities that facilitate or hinder the achievement of results. They deploy innovative approaches and mixed methods to highlight the pathways to follow in the often complex, non-linear and long-term process of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and country levels.

16. UN-Women evaluations fall into two main categories:

(a) *Corporate evaluations*, which are independent assessments undertaken by the independent Evaluation Office with the support of external evaluators. They are utilized to assess issues of corporate strategic significance concerning development effectiveness, organizational performance and normative and operational coherence;

(b) *Decentralized evaluations*, which are conducted by independent external evaluators but managed by programmatic offices. They are conducted in full consultation or in partnership with national stakeholders and United Nations agencies, to the extent possible. Decentralized evaluations are utilized to assess issues of significance at the programmatic level and play a crucial role in managing

[9] The evaluation types listed here are defined in the annex. They fall under the category of self-evaluations or internal evaluations as referred to in ST/SGB/2000/8. They are all undertaken by external qualified independent evaluators.

for results. They are key inputs for corporate evaluations and United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations.

17. UN-Women corporate and decentralized evaluations assess the operational, normative support and coordination work of the Entity through strategy/policy, organizational, thematic, regional, country and programme evaluation. Joint evaluation is also promoted.

18. UN-Women corporate and decentralized evaluations are undertaken during different stages of the programme life cycle and include evaluability assessment, midterm evaluation, final evaluation and meta-evaluation.

19. Evaluation criteria are the standard against which evaluation judgements are made and correspond to the key evaluation questions. UN-Women evaluation criteria are aligned with those of UNEG, including criteria based on gender equality and international human rights principles. They include relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, impact, coherence, connectedness, coverage, coordination, innovation, participation and inclusiveness, social transformation, empowerment and equality. The Evaluation Office will tailor the definition of each evaluation criterion to the unique mandate and role of UN-Women and will develop specific guidance on the use of the criteria.

20. The selection of evaluation criteria for both corporate and decentralized evaluations is dependent on the specifics of each evaluation and will be informed by the characteristics and context of the intervention in question, as well as the need to focus on particular areas of inquiry.

Evaluation quality assurance and capacity development

21. The Evaluation Office will develop and maintain evaluation quality assurance mechanisms in order to continuously improve and enhance the quality and credibility of the Entity's corporate and decentralized evaluations and of the evaluation function overall. The system will draw on the UNEG norms and standards, the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation, the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system, and UNEG guidance documents.

22. Key elements of the quality assurance mechanisms include:

- Guidance and tools for conducting and managing corporate and decentralized gender equality and women's rights responsive evaluation
- Quality criteria for assessing all UN-Women evaluation reports
- The peer review of corporate and decentralized evaluation reports, processes and the evaluation function overall
- The meta-evaluation of UN-Women evaluations
- Evaluation quality assurance panels.

23. In order to incrementally improve the quality of evaluation, UN-Women evaluation capacities will be strengthened globally and at the regional and country levels. The Entity will also promote evaluation capacity across United Nations organizations.

24. Furthermore, the development of national capacities is a central component of the work of UN-Women. The Entity will support national capacity development as a

key element of all its evaluation processes. Partnerships for evaluation capacity development initiatives will be promoted to support the capacity of Governments, national and regional evaluation associations and networks with respect to gender-responsive evaluation.

25. An evaluation partnership and capacity development strategy will be developed at the corporate and regional levels.

Evaluation planning

26. UN-Women systematically plans and budgets for evaluations through a biannual corporate evaluation plan and biannual decentralized integrated monitoring, evaluation and research plans.[10]

27. As outlined in table 1, eight key parameters with two levels of priority are considered in selecting corporate and decentralized evaluations to ensure evaluation coverage of the key areas of the work and organizational performance of UN-Women. Evaluation planning will prioritize strategic-level results and will be driven by parameters beyond that of significant investment. The Executive Board may also request an evaluation on the basis of these parameters.

Table 1
Eight parameters for prioritizing evaluations

First priority	1.	**Relevance of the subject**. Is the evaluation subject a socioeconomic or political priority of the mandate and role of UN-Women? Is it a key priority of the strategic plan or the annual workplan? Is it a geographic priority of UN-Women, e.g., levels of gender inequality and the situation of women in the country?
	2.	**Risk associated with the intervention**. Are there political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present potential high risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for management decision-making?
	3.	**Significant investment**. Is the intervention considered a significant investment in relation to the overall office portfolio (more than one third)?
Second priority	4.	**Demands for accountability from stakeholders**. Are stakeholders specifically requesting the evaluation (e.g., through donor requirements in direct financing and co-financing arrangements)? Can the demand be satisfied through an evaluation that is already planned?
	5.	**Potential for replication and scaling-up**. Would an evaluation provide the information necessary to identify the factors required for the success of an intervention and determine the feasibility of its replication or scaling-up? Is the intervention a pilot or/and an innovative initiative?

[10] See UN-Women strategic plan.

	6.	**Potential for joint or United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluation**. Does the evaluation present a clear opportunity to evaluate jointly with other partners (United Nations country teams, national Governments, etc.) or fold into a United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluation to avoid duplication and promote coordination?
Cross-cutting (to be assessed in all prioritized evaluations)	7.	**Feasibility for implementing evaluation**. Does the commissioning office have the financial and human resources available to conduct or manage a high-quality evaluation within the time period indicated? Is the evaluability of the intervention high enough to conduct an in-depth study that can result in sound findings, recommendations and lessons?
	8.	**Knowledge gap**. Will the evaluation help to fill a pressing knowledge gap in relation to achieving gender equality or the empowerment of women?

28. Corporate and decentralized evaluation planning in UN-Women is guided by the requirements outlined in table 2.

Table 2
UN-Women evaluation requirements

	Type of evaluation	*Target*	*Responsible office*
Corporate	Strategy/policy evaluation	At least one evaluation per strategic plan life cycle, additionally as mandated and resourced	Evaluation Office
	Organizational performance evaluation	At least one evaluation during the strategic plan life cycle[a]	Evaluation Office
	Normative support evaluation	At least one evaluation during the strategic plan life cycle	Evaluation Office
	Thematic evaluation	At least one evaluation focused on each thematic area of the strategic plan during its life cycle[b]	Evaluation Office
Corporate or decentralized	Regional cluster/thematic evaluation	At least one cluster/thematic evaluation in each of the five regions during the strategic plan life cycle	Regional office or Evaluation Office

	Type of evaluation	*Target*	*Responsible office*
	Country-level evaluation[c]	At least one country-level evaluation per country programme/plan life cycle; evaluation should be coordinated to align with or be integrated into United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluation where feasible[d]	Evaluation Office or regional office
Decentralized	Programme evaluation	To ensure sufficient evaluation coverage of the office portfolio,[e] with priority given to significant investment, it is recommended that: • Programmes equal to or exceeding one third of the overall office portfolio be evaluated When there is no programme that equals or exceeds one third of the overall office portfolio, it is recommended that: • A number of programmes that together equal at least one third of the overall office portfolio be evaluated (on a clustered or individual basis) Evaluation is also recommended: • When a commitment has been made to key stakeholders (donors, Member States, beneficiaries, etc.) • For all strategic pilot initiatives that are designed for replication and scaling-up	Country office, regional office, Headquarters division

Type of evaluation	*Target*	*Responsible office*
	Alignment with country-level evaluations: • **Final and midterm programme evaluations will be planned so that their findings will be available and relevant for feeding into country-level evaluation, including United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluation**	

[a] Given the short time period covered by the first UN-Women strategic plan, evaluations of organizational performance and normative support will need to be prioritized according to the planning parameters (para. 27).

[b] During the first (2012-2013) cycle of the UN-Women strategic plan, evaluations of all thematic areas may not be possible, owing to lack of time available to compile aggregated results.

[c] Country-level includes multi-country offices, which will eventually phase to country offices.

[d] A limited number of evaluability assessments and/or evaluations of strategic notes/annual workplans will be conducted by the Evaluation Office and/or regional offices during 2013, beginning with those countries that have full delegation of authority.

[e] The office investment portfolio is defined as the total amount of both core and non-core resources.

29. UN-Women evaluation plans should move beyond the above evaluation requirements where there is both a demonstrated need and capacity available to evaluate.

30. Resource allocation for meeting these evaluation requirements will be integrated into the overall planning and budgeting process. The recommended minimum level of investment in evaluation is 3 per cent of the total plan/programme budget. An additional 3 to 10 per cent of the overall programme budget should be allocated for monitoring, which reflects the importance of monitoring not only for programme management, but also for effective evaluation.

Management of evaluation

31. The management of UN-Women evaluations is carried out in accordance with the established quality assurance standards and systems issued by the Evaluation Office so as to ensure independent, high-quality and credible evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned. The conduct and management of corporate and decentralized evaluations must abide by these standards and systems and are subject to quality review.

32. Evaluation management protocols include:

- The conduct of evaluability assessments, including with respect to the gender equality and women's rights elements of the intervention
- The analysis of stakeholders, including various groups of women and men who are both rights holders and duty bearers

- The development of terms of reference in a participatory manner
- The transparent and competitive recruitment of evaluators/evaluation teams with adequate experience in the areas of gender equality and women's rights
- Ensuring overall stakeholder participation in the process, including the composition and management of evaluation reference groups that include women who are both rights holders and duty bearers
- Quality assurance processes established for interim and final evaluation products
- The development and resourcing of dissemination plans that seek to ensure that information reaches a wide range of stakeholders
- Support for the development of management response and action plans in consultation with stakeholders.

33. The UN-Women publication *A Manager's Guide to Gender Equality and Human Rights Responsive Evaluation* provides the tools necessary for the management of all phases of the evaluation process: preparation, conduct and follow-up/use. The UNEG handbook *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance* is also a key reference for all UN-Women evaluations.

Use of evaluation for improved performance in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women

34. Evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned are used to improve organizational and United Nations system-wide performance in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and improve coherence between the normative and the operational work carried out in those areas. More specifically, evaluation provides key inputs for:

(a) The refinement of norms on gender equality and the empowerment of women by intergovernmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women;

(b) The provision of support for the UN-Women Executive Board's oversight and approval role;

(c) The planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of:

(i) UN-Women plans, policies, strategies and programmes/projects;

(ii) United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and "Delivering as one" country programmes;

(iii) United Nations system-wide policies, action plans and programmes;

(iv) International, regional and national plans, policies and goals;

(v) The strengthening of system-wide coordination mechanisms for gender equality;

(vi) System-wide evaluation processes;

(vii) The development of gender-responsive evaluation approaches and methodologies;

(viii) Knowledge management and research initiatives.

35. The use of evaluation is facilitated through the mandatory development of management responses and action plans for all independent evaluations within six weeks of the finalization of evaluation reports. For joint evaluations, management responses and action plans are to be developed jointly.[11]

36. This policy will be complemented by a system aimed at global accountability and the tracking of evaluation use (GATE system), which will be used by the independent Evaluation Office to monitor and report on the status of management responses and action plans to the Executive Director and the Executive Board on an annual basis.

37. The use of evaluation is the responsibility of all managers and staff. It is promoted within UN-Women through a system of organizational incentives, inclusion in the performance appraisal system and investment in evaluation capacity development. The Executive Board is also responsible for considering and using evaluation results in its work.

38. In the broader United Nations system and the international community, the use of available evaluation information concerning gender equality and the empowerment of women is promoted through the creation and maintenance of knowledge platforms regarding evaluations on gender equality.

Disclosure and dissemination

39. UN-Women demonstrates its commitment to public accountability and the sharing of knowledge by disclosing all evaluation plans, independent evaluation terms of reference, final reports and management responses/action plans through the centralized, web-based and publicly accessible UN-Women Evaluation Resource Centre.

40. Corporate evaluation plans and the evaluation sections of decentralized monitoring, evaluation and research plans are posted within one month of their approval. Evaluation terms of reference, reports, management responses and action plans are posted within six weeks of their finalization; final evaluation reports are to be disclosed concurrently with the corresponding management responses and action plans. Evaluation dissemination products are posted upon their finalization.

41. UN-Women understands that disclosure through the Evaluation Resource Centre system in and of itself is not sufficient to promote the use of evaluative information, nor is it adequate to ensure accessibility to a wide range of stakeholders. Therefore, dissemination strategies are developed and resourced for all independent evaluations. They are geared towards enhancing use and promoting evaluation through:

- The development of tailored knowledge products
- Efforts to address barriers to access for key identified rights holders and duty bearers, particularly women
- The use of innovative dissemination methods

[11] UN-Women should issue a unilateral response in cases in which a joint management response/action plan is not feasible.

- The development of methodological notes on the conduct of evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights.

Roles and responsibilities in evaluation

42. It is the responsibility of all UN-Women staff to adhere to the principles of this policy and promote a culture of evaluation responsive to gender equality and women's rights in the context of their respective roles, both within the Entity and in the wider United Nations system.

43. As a recently created element within the United Nations system, the process for establishing the regional architecture of UN-Women is unfolding in a phased approach during the 2011-2013 strategic plan period. Specific roles and accountabilities assigned for corporate and decentralized evaluations are reflective of this process.

44. The Executive Board will approve the evaluation policy and will be informed of corporate evaluation plans, corporate evaluations and the corresponding management responses. It will be made aware of the status and the implementation of both corporate and decentralized evaluation plans and management responses and action plans through the annual evaluation report, which is prepared by the independent Evaluation Office. The Executive Board may also request areas for corporate evaluation based on the eight parameters defined in the policy, including joint evaluations with other United Nations agencies. More specifically, it will:

- Review and discuss the corporate evaluation plan
- Discuss key results of corporate evaluations and consider their implications for the strategic management of UN-Women
- Be informed of evaluation findings and recommendations when exercising its oversight and approval functions with respect to UN-Women policies and strategies
- Establish ad hoc working groups to discuss evaluation results.

In addition, individual Executive Board members may participate in reference groups for selected corporate evaluations.

45. The Commission on the Status of Women and other intergovernmental bodies can consider findings, recommendations and lessons learned from UN-Women evaluations in the promulgation of policies.

46. The Executive Director is accountable for UN-Women results and is the main champion of evaluation within the Entity. She or he will provide the political will and enabling environment for enhancing the evaluation culture. She or he is responsible for safeguarding the independence of the Evaluation Office by appointing a competent Head/Director of Evaluation and ensuring that the Office is adequately staffed and resourced to fulfil its role in UN-Women evaluation and coordination of system-wide evaluations with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women. She or he approves the corporate evaluation plan and is responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of management responses and action plans corresponding to corporate evaluations and for presenting these to the Executive Board. Through the Deputy Executive Directors, she or he is ultimately accountable for the implementation of all decentralized

monitoring, evaluation and research plans and the utilization of evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons through management responses and action plans. In addition, she or he chairs the Evaluation Committee.

47. The Evaluation Office is the custodian of the UN-Women evaluation function. It reports directly to the Executive Director to safeguard its independence from management, thus enabling it to conduct its work with impartiality. Its main responsibilities are to:

(a) Establish effective corporate evaluation systems:

(i) Develop an evaluation policy and strategy and the Evaluation Office annual workplan;

(ii) Develop a corporate evaluation plan and conduct independent corporate evaluations. While maintaining its independent decision-making process, the Office, in developing the corporate evaluation plan, will take into consideration the interests of various stakeholders (e.g., the Executive Board, programme countries and UN-Women offices);

(iii) Develop an annual evaluation report to the Executive Board;

(iv) Present strategic evaluation results to the Executive Board;

(v) Alert senior management about issues arising from evaluation;

(vi) Develop evaluation systems, including for quality assurance, planning, disclosure, management responses and action plans and knowledge management;

(vii) Promote the use of evaluation through the development of evaluative knowledge products;

(b) Strengthen decentralized evaluation systems:

(i) Develop guidance on evaluation that is responsive to gender equality and women's rights, including on evaluation criteria;

(ii) Strengthen decentralized evaluation systems, conduct regional strategic evaluations and provide direct support for decentralized evaluation planning, conduct, follow-up and use;

(iii) Provide technical advice regarding programme evaluability;

(iv) Develop and maintain a roster of evaluation expertise in the area of gender equality;

(c) Lead United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation:

(i) Support implementation and reporting with respect to the system-wide action plan evaluation indicator through the development of guidance and technical support;

(ii) Lead and participate in UNEG;

(iii) Promote and lead joint evaluations and system-wide evaluations with respect to gender equality;

(d) Promote innovation and knowledge generation concerning what works in promoting gender equality, through national evaluation capacity-building:

(i) Build UN-Women, United Nations system and national evaluation capacity to carry out evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights, by supporting evaluation associations and national monitoring and evaluation systems;

(ii) Build and maintain a repository of evaluations concerning gender equality.

48. A competent Head/Director is appointed to lead the Evaluation Office, with the authority to report directly to the Executive Director and to present the annual evaluation report to the Executive Board. She or he is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Office meets high professional standards in the implementation of its workplan and the corporate evaluation plan. She or he is also responsible for managing the budget of the Office and for the appointment of its staff. She or he must meet UNEG core competencies for evaluators and abide by UNEG norms and standards, the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation and the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system.

49. The Head/Director of the Evaluation Office is supported in the implementation of the Office workplan by evaluation specialists, evaluation analysts, regional evaluation specialists and evaluation associates who report directly to her or him, meet UNEG core competencies for evaluators and abide by the UNEG norms and standards and the UNEG ethical guidelines and code of conduct.

50. In particular, the Regional Evaluation Specialists, located in regional offices, will conduct and manage strategic decentralized evaluations at the regional and country levels, enhancing the independence of the processes. They will also allow for a more symbiotic exchange between corporate and decentralized evaluation systems by supporting the implementation of the evaluation policies and strategies in their respective regions through the formulation of regional strategies. In addition, they will support the capacity development of UN-Women staff with a view to managing decentralized evaluations, United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations and other joint evaluation processes from a gender perspective.

51. The Evaluation Committee is composed of members of the senior management team, Regional Directors and external senior evaluation experts from sister United Nations agencies. The Committee acts as an advisory forum for the Executive Director and the Evaluation Office in order to further ensure the independence and quality of the evaluation function and promote the use of all UN-Women evaluations. The Evaluation Committee meets biannually to review the corporate evaluation plan, corporate evaluation reports and the corresponding management responses and action plans, and the annual evaluation report to the Executive Board, and to consider any other significant evaluation-related issue. It also provides oversight of the planning and implementation of decentralized evaluations.

52. Senior management staff (Deputy Executive Directors, Division Directors, Regional Directors and country representatives) champion the use of all evaluations within UN-Women and ensure that adequate financial and human capacity is made available for decentralized evaluation so as to ensure a fully effective and efficient evaluation function. They are responsible for creating an enabling environment for the strengthening of the evaluation culture in the area under their purview. They put in place the factors and resources necessary to ensure the evaluability of

interventions, including quality design and monitoring, reporting and documentation systems. They are ultimately responsible for the use of findings, recommendations and lessons learned resulting from the evaluations commissioned by their respective offices and from other corporate or relevant evaluations. The use of evaluation for improved performance will be included as a key element in the performance appraisals of senior managers. More specifically:

- Senior management will assign monitoring and evaluation focal points and evaluation task managers in advance of the preparation stage for all decentralized evaluations
- Senior management is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of management responses and action plans corresponding to the decentralized evaluations commissioned by their offices, and for reporting on their status through the GATE system
- Regional Directors play an oversight role with respect to decentralized evaluations in their region, and are responsible for ensuring adequate staffing and competencies for the fulfilment of evaluation roles, including the mandatory recruitment of monitoring and evaluation specialists or appointment of monitoring and evaluation focal points
- The Programme Division will approve decentralized monitoring, evaluation and research plans and support decentralized evaluations by guaranteeing the evaluability of programmes through the allocation of appropriate resources, technical support and guidance on the development of theories of change, performance monitoring frameworks and their implementation, and the setting-up of programme documentation systems.

53. In order to implement evaluation plans and manage evaluations, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists/Focal Points coordinate, support and communicate information about all evaluation-related work of the programmatic office in order to promote compliance with the evaluation policy. In addition, Evaluation Task Managers are responsible for supporting the overall management of individual evaluation processes, including ensuring overall stakeholder participation.

54. The Human Resources Section and the Procurement Section will ensure that all individual or institutional contracts with external evaluators will include signed copies of the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system.

55. The roles and responsibilities outlined above will be reinforced through a system of incentives and inclusion in individual and office workplans and formally through the performance appraisal system.

External evaluation

56. An external review of the implementation of the evaluation policy will be conducted in 2015. A peer review of the evaluation function will be conducted in 2014 to inform the review of the policy.

57. The external independent evaluation of UN-Women can be conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Joint Inspection Unit, given their respective mandates.

Annex

Types of evaluation conducted in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*

Two main types of evaluation are conducted in the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women):

- *Corporate evaluations*, which are independent assessments undertaken by the independent Evaluation Office with the support of external evaluators. They are utilized to assess issues of corporate strategic significance with regard to the effectiveness of development, organizational performance and normative and operational coherence;
- *Decentralized evaluations*, which are conducted by independent external evaluators but managed by programmatic offices. They are conducted in full consultation or in partnership with national stakeholders and United Nations agencies, to the extent possible. They are utilized to assess issues of significance at the programmatic level and play a crucial role in managing for results. They are key inputs for corporate evaluations and United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations.

Evaluation is undertaken at the following levels:

- *Strategy/policy evaluation* is an assessment of the implementation of and/or compliance with a strategy or policy. It analyses the design, coherence and long-term impact of a set of programmes within a particular framework;
- *Normative support evaluation* is an assessment of the work carried out by UN-Women to support the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, resolutions, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard-setting instruments, at the global, regional and national levels. The Entity's normative work also includes support for the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, namely, their integration into legislation, policies and development plans, and for their implementation at the programme level;
- *Evaluation of organizational performance* is an evaluation of an organization's capacity to efficiently manage its assets for the achievements of results and its capacity for innovation and change. It involves examining its decision-making processes and organizational structures and institutional capacities;
- *Thematic evaluation* is an assessment of a thematic area of work. It analyses multiple programmes addressing a theme with a view to understanding the combined results in an area and better understanding the opportunities, challenges and gaps in programming and results. It can be conducted at the global, regional or country level;
- *Regional/cluster evaluation* is an assessment of the work of the Entity at the regional level. It involves assessing the contributions made by UN-Women to results in a specific region by either analysing multiple programmes across a

* There are additional types of evaluations that UN-Women can undertake. These will be fully explained and listed in guidance developed by the Entity's Evaluation Office.

region on a specific theme or focusing on other programming elements, such as capacity development, innovation, partnership strategies and regional-level results;

- *Country evaluation* is a systematic assessment of the contributions made by UN-Women to development results with respect to gender equality at the country level. It focuses on a set of interventions and their overall success in advancing gender equality in the country;

- *Programme evaluation* is an assessment of an individual UN-Women programme and its outcomes.

The evaluation of an intervention at any level can be undertaken at different points in time:

- *Evaluability assessment* is a systematic process that helps to identify whether an intervention is in a condition to be evaluated and whether an evaluation is justified, feasible and likely to provide useful information. Its purpose is not only to determine whether or not the evaluation is to be undertaken, but also to prepare the programme to generate all the conditions necessary for an evaluation.

- *Midterm evaluation* is conducted at the midpoint of an intervention's life cycle. It is primarily formative, with a focus on process. It can also provide an early indication of the achievement of output-level results. It is useful as a more in-depth and credible study than a midterm review to make adjustments to an intervention.

- *Final evaluation* is conducted at the end of an intervention's life cycle. It is usually summative in nature, focusing on the assessment of outcome-level results, but final evaluations also capture lessons learned from the implementation of the intervention.

- *Meta-evaluation* is the evaluation of an evaluation. It is an assessment by an evaluator of one or more completed evaluation reports that have been prepared by other evaluators. It is used mainly to assess the overall quality of evaluations against certain established standards or criteria. It can be combined with meta-analysis, which synthesizes information from a number of evaluations to identify discernible patterns and trends.

UN-Women also promotes and leads joint evaluations concerning gender equality and women's empowerment:

- *Joint evaluation* is defined as an evaluation that is co-commissioned and managed by UN-Women and at least one other organization, with each organization having decision-making power with respect to the evaluation process. Joint evaluations are often conducted for joint programmes. Key examples of joint evaluations include United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations and "Delivering as one" evaluations.